AMERICAN HELICOPTER SOCIETY
International Commemoration Society
Remarks for Administrator Bolden
May 8, 2015

It's great to be here with all of you … I want to thank Executive Director Mike Hirschberg as well as my friends here at Langley.

We say that NASA is with you when you fly. A big part of the reason for that are the men and women of the Langley Research Center – more on this in a moment.

I've been looking forward to today because it brings together two of my great loves – helicopters … and the people of Langley. I love flying helicopters, so any time I get to spend some time with fellow vertical flight enthusiasts it's a good day. Quite frankly, any time I get to meet with Team Langley it's a good day, too.

You might say I'm "chipper for choppers."

Last update: 5/6/15 at 12:50pm by SR

BENEFITS OF VERTICAL AVIATION

I'm sure that I don't have to remind anyone in this room about why this work matters … about how 3 million lives have been saved by helicopters over the past 70 years… or about the benefits of being able to go where other vehicles cannot.

From the first responders who deploy in air ambulances … to our brave men and women serving overseas … to Coast Guard rescue teams … to moms and dads in every part of our country that anxiously await traffic reports so they can get home to their families a little earlier …

Vertical flight technology saves lives. It empowers those who protect our way of life and it improves our quality of life.

What's more, with helicopter production on the rise, vertical flight technology is also producing tangible benefits for our economy.

Since 2010, civil helicopter production rose from $6.9 billion to $11 billion.

There's an also considerable economic benefit from technology spinoffs – and in this case when I say "*spin*off" I mean that literally!

Take for example the advanced airfoils that were designed and wind tested here at Langley. They allow helicopters to fly faster, last longer and carry heavier loads. This technology is being put to use by Van Horn Aviation, which makes highly durable tail rotor blades that last twice as long as older blades.

RECONGITION OF LANGELY

With this in mind, I want to take this opportunity to thank the American Helicopter Society for bestowing this recognition on the men and women of Langley – and I want to congratulate Team Langley for being recognized for their important work.

There has been flight research – and vertical flight research specifically -- here at Langley for longer than there has been a NASA. Construction on our nation's first civilian flight laboratory (here on the banks of the Chesapeake) began in 1917 – two years after the creation of NASA's predecessor, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA).

Research on vertical flight was not far behind. In 1920, N-A-C-A released a technical paper that was penned by Langley's chief physicist, E.P. Warner. It was entitled "The Problem of the Helicopter."

In the years that followed, Langley researchers have provided research and data to the world that have advanced vertical flight – and all flight as we know it. They have tested configurations, components, models, innovative concepts and new flight vehicles.

CONCLUSION: MOVING FORWARD

Today, every American helicopter – both civil and military – has NASA-developed technology incorporated into and onto it ... we're not stopping now!

We're working with Army researchers to improve the aerodynamics and fuel efficiency of military helicopters, for example.

We're also developing technologies to decrease noise and vibration – and this could have some very significant impacts on civilian helicopter transportation.

Two decades from now, you may very well be able to hop a large, 100-passenger rotorcraft in Washington and take it to New York City – and that would go a long way toward easing congestion at our airports.

Of course these are just a few examples. Just recently you might have seen the news reports about the test flight of "Greased Lightning" – it's sort of a plane/helicopter combo that can take off like a helicopter, but looks and flies like a plane.

In short, thanks to the diligent work of the team here, I'm confident the future of aeronautics – particularly rotary wing aero is very bright. For all of us in this field and for those joining us in the years ahead, the future is going to be a very exciting place.

So let me say one more time … Congratulations Team Langley!